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ABSTRACT

This handbook is part of the technical assistance effort of the California State Department of Education to clarify the operations of the California schools for parents so they might better support the education of their children. It provides information on the following: (1) the educational system, enrollment procedures and transportation, especially for elementary and secondary students; (2) basic school programs and curriculum; (3) grades, promotions and testing, with an explanation of the types of tests used in California, such as the California Assessment Program tests and the high school proficiency tests; (4) bilingual education and other services to language minority students who are of limited English proficiency; (5) additional educational programs and services, such as vocational education, continuation education, advanced placement, adult education, child development programs, and summer school; (6) parental involvement with schools, teachers and administrators; and (7) the structure of the public school system. (PS)

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A Parent's Handbook on California Education

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Bill Honig—Superintendent of Public Instruction
Sacramento, 1986

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Foreword

California's public schools offer a wealth of educational opportunities for all students. With this handbook you will be able to understand and gain access to the schools and, thus, take advantage of the full range of those opportunities.

Moreover, Californians from all walks of life are now engaged in a comprehensive school reform effort to revitalize our public schools and provide educators with the tools and resources they need to ensure excellence in all our schools. Statewide cooperative efforts are now under way to improve the school curriculum; attract top-flight teachers; recruit and train principals; improve tests and textbooks; and involve parents, business leaders, and the community in school reform.

The partnership between home and school is an important element in this effort. We will improve the quality of education for our children only to the extent that we are able to integrate the resources of home and school and capitalize on the strengths of each. Parents, teachers, and school administrators together share the responsibility of providing an excellent education for all students. The interest many of you parents have shown in having this handbook produced demonstrates the far-reaching commitment and desire you have to become involved in your children's education. That is encouraging, and I commend you for your wisdom and foresight.

Your involvement in education is one of the most important factors in student achievement. It is not hard to see why. Children readily take to school the lessons they learn at home. When their parents—their first and most important teachers—value learning and achievement, children do the same. Time and again, educational research has demonstrated the powerful and consistent influence of parental involvement on students' learning. In those instances when students benefit from good school programs and supportive parents, students' achievement is highest. The State Department of Education is committed to encouraging parental involvement in public education.

The cooperation of home and school is the key to excellent school programs and effective learning by students. I hope that this handbook fosters that effective partnership.

Bill Honig

Superintendent of Public Instruction

Preface

As prime educators parents are knowledgeable about the needs of their children but are often left out simply because they are not familiar with the educational environment. With the information provided in *A Parent's Handbook on California Education,* parents should be able to assist their children with schooling in a more effective way.

Included in the handbook is information on student enrollment, public school programs and curriculum, graduation requirements, bilingual education, parental involvement, transportation, year-round education, child development, and so on, which will be helpful for parents to provide immediate assistance for their children. This handbook also provides information about a variety of programs, such as alternative education, vocational education, continuation education, work experience education, and adult education, which may be helpful not only for students but also for parents who seek further educational opportunities in California. We in the Department are pleased to be involved in the development of this handbook. We believe that it will make an important contribution indirectly to the improvement of educational services for students by educating their parents.

We wish to recognize the members of the Department's Language Minority Parent Handbook Committee, who assisted in the development of this handbook. The committee consisted of Robert Bennett, Gene Bradford, Richard Diaz, Don Glines, Marcelett Henry, Edward O'Malley, Chong Park (Chairman), Dolores Paz, Paul Plowman, Dan Reibson, Tomas Roybal, Glen Thomas, Elena Wong, and Alex Yeh. The committee members confirmed the need for the handbook, organized an effective mechanism for developing it, and provided guidance during the writing of each draft.

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Introduction

A *Parent's Handbook on California Education* is part of the technical assistance effort of the State Department of Education to clarify the operations of California schools for parents so that they might better support the education of their children. Parents should be the prime educators and must be knowledgeable about the needs of their children.

The handbook provides basic information on the educational system and enrollment procedures particularly relevant for students who are enrolled in kindergarten through grade twelve. It also explains the kinds of tests used in California, such as the California Assessment Program tests and the high school proficiency tests. The handbook also includes a section on bilingual education and other services to language minority students who are of limited-English proficiency. Other programs, such as vocational education, adult education, and continuation education, are described so that parents can better understand them. Another section describes parental involvement to enable parents to work cooperatively with teachers and administrators.

The handbook does not provide comprehensive information because each program may be operated in different ways in each school or district. Parents should contact classroom teachers, school counselors, principals, or other local educational agency personnel for more detailed information if necessary.

1.0 Enrollment and Attendance; General Information; Transportation

1.1 When should my child enroll in school?

Your child must be enrolled in the first grade after he or she reaches the age of six. Children five years and nine months old before September may be enrolled when school begins in September. Immigrant children of school age should be enrolled in school as soon as they arrive in the United States. Except in year-round schools, which begin in July, children are enrolled in school in the first days of September. The usual school year is from September to June.

1.2 Will my child be able to attend a neighborhood school?

As a rule, yes. But some school districts, to avoid overcrowding or achieve racial balance or provide specialized education away from your neighborhood, may transport children to schools away from your neighborhood. If your district buses students, you may ask that your children remain at your neighborhood school.

1.3 How is my child's grade level determined?

Grade level is determined primarily on the basis of age and school experience. Children who are at least four years and nine months old in September may be enrolled in kindergarten. Children who are already six are enrolled in the first grade, and children older than six are placed by the principal at an appropriate level from grade one through grade twelve.

1.4 Do American schools accept course credits earned in foreign countries?

For children of elementary school age, records of previous schoolwork will help the school provide the best program for your child. As for high school students, credits for previous schoolwork are evaluated before placement.

1.5 How is the noon meal provided for students?

Children can bring a lunch from home, or they can purchase one at school. Most schools have a cafeteria where nutritious, well-balanced meals are available for a minimal charge. Parents with limited finances may ask school officials if they qualify for a free or reduced-price lunch. Schools in California are required by law to provide a nutritionally adequate meal to every needy child in every public school each school day. Some schools provide a breakfast for a minimal fee or at no charge if the family is eligible for the low-income category.

1.6 How much will I have to pay for my child's schooling?

Admission to American public schools is free, and books are lent to students at no charge. Uniforms are not required. For some classes, however, particularly in high school, you may have to pay small fees for personal supplies. Parents are expected to pay for the child's lunch.

1.7 What do I do when my child is absent from school?

You should telephone the school, letting the school know why your child is not in school. On the day your child is able to attend school, you should give the child a signed note. On the note you should give the date or dates of absence and the reason for the absence.

1.8 Will my child ride a school bus from home to school and back?

Not all districts offer school bus transportation. Of those districts that do, only those children qualify whose homes are beyond reasonable walking distances from schools. You should ask at your child's school about availability of transportation, locations of bus stops, pickup and drop-off times, and any special orientation meetings for parents and younger students to make the first day of school easier.

1.9 What happens if my child misses the bus?

It is important for you to have a plan to protect your child and to get the child to school by other means. You should talk with your child to ensure that he or she know what to do and where to go in case the bus is missed.

1.10 If my child qualifies for special education and cannot ride the regular school bus, what can be done?

If your child qualifies for special education, the individual education plan for your child will tell what type of transportation for which your child will be eligible. You can ask the staff at the school for more information.

1.11 What can I do to protect my child while he or she is riding on the school bus?

Your child should know the rules for riding on the bus. If your child has difficulty understanding the driver, you should help your child to understand the rules and obey them. School bus drivers try hard to

make the ride to and from school safe for children, but they need your help and cooperation from your child.

1.12 May school districts charge a fee for transportation on a school bus between home and school?

Yes, a fee may be charged. You should ask at your child's school whether a fee is charged in your school district. No fee may be charged for transporting a handicapped child or a child whose parents or guardians have a low income. The school district decides who qualifies for free transportation.

2.0 Basic School Program; Curriculum

2.1 What is a minimum day?

A minimum day is a shortened school day. Students are allowed to go home earlier than they would on a regular school day. The rest of the day is used by the school staff for meetings and other school business. You will be notified in writing well in advance when a minimum day is planned and when your child will be dismissed.

2.2 What subjects are taught in elementary grades (K—6)?

The basic subjects taught in elementary (K—6) grades are language arts (including listening, speaking, reading, and writing), mathematics, social science, science, and physical education. Other subjects may be music and art. Some schools teach reading and other subjects in two languages.

2.3 What subjects are taught at the high school level?

Offerings vary. You will need to contact the district in which your child is enrolled to find out what subjects are offered. A sample of classes might include algebra, English, typing, world history, biology, physical education, foreign language, the arts, home economics, industrial arts, and vocational education. Some of these courses are required, and some are available to accommodate students' interests. You should check with your local school for details.

2.4 What high school requirements will my children have to meet?

Starting with the 1986-87 school year, all pupils who receive a high school diploma must complete, while in grades nine through twelve, the following courses:

1. At least the following numbers of courses in the subjects specified, each course having a duration of one year:
   a. Three courses in English
   b. Two courses in mathematics
   c. Two courses in science, including biological and physical sciences
   d. Three courses in social science, including United States history and geography; world history, culture, and geography; and American government, civics, and economics
   e. One course in fine arts or foreign language
   f. Two courses in physical education unless the pupil has been exempted, pursuant to legal provisions
2. Such other coursework as the governing board of the school district may by rule specify

The important thing to remember is that by the start of the 1986-87 school year, your child should plan to complete all of the required courses. For further information, check with your school district.

2.5 What is independent study?

Independent study makes it possible for a student (in kindergarten through twelfth grade) to have a program of studies that is considered equal to classroom study but is located somewhere away from the usual school classroom. Independent study may permit schooling at home or in any other location that may provide suitable opportunities for learning. School districts have the right to make their own rules for independent study.

2.6 What other programs may operate in my child's school?

The federal and state governments have established programs for students who have special needs. Your child may need special help or assistance, for example, in learning English. However, not all districts have special programs.

3.0 Grades; Promotions; Testing

3.1 What does an elementary student's report card include?

Some districts prepare report cards by using letters such as *A, B, C, D, F,* and *I,* while other districts use the letters *E, G, S, N,* and *U* or *S, U,* and *N.* Although there are differences, the general content or idea is similar. Elementary report cards usually list the following subjects:

- Language arts (listening, speaking, reading and writing, grammar, and spelling)
- Mathematics
- Social science
- Natural science
- Health education
- Music
- Arts

The report card may also contain the attendance record of the student, a citizenship grade, and a place for comments by the teacher and the parent. The report card symbols are usually explained on the report card itself.

3.2 What does a high school student's report card include?

It usually consists of the title of each course, the name of the student and teacher, achievement grades for courses taken, a grade for citizenship, a place for the comments of teachers and parents, and the attendance record of the student.

3.3 What do the report card symbols mean?

Almost all schools use one of the three following systems:

A = Excellent
B = Good
C = Satisfactory
D = Needs improvement
F = Failure
I = Incomplete

E = Excellent
G = Good
S = Satisfactory
N = Needs improvement
U = Unsatisfactory

S = Satisfactory
U = Unsatisfactory
N = Needs improvement

3.4 What is a citizenship grade?

It is equivalent to a behavior grade and is based on the way a teacher sees a student in terms of his or her politeness, responsibility, obedience, fair play, and sociability.

3.5 What is a work habit grade?

A work habit grade indicates how a teacher rates your child's inventiveness, accuracy, promptness in completing the work assigned, and neatness.

3.6 What should I do when I receive my child's report card?

You should review the teacher's comments and the grades. You should sign and return the report card to school with your child. Sometimes the teacher may ask you to meet with him or her to discuss the progress of your child. You may wish to include your own comments on the report card.

3.7 How often are report cards issued?

Four times a year.

3.8 What are the requirements for promotion to the next grade?

On the basis of the progress made by the students, elementary school teachers decide whether the student will go to the next grade or remain in the same grade. If the student is to stay in the same grade, parents will be consulted. In the case of high school, course credits completed and the standardized test scores are factors reviewed for grade promotion. If you have any questions regarding grade promotion, call your local school and ask for the policy on school promotion.

3.9 What procedures are involved in grade retention?

The school expects every student to be promoted to the next grade. If a student has learning difficulties, the teacher will help. If the student does not learn enough to be able to succeed in the next grade level, it might be necessary to retain the student for another semester. The school will consult with the parent or guardian to determine what is best for the student.

3.10 What does the pupil proficiency law require?

It requires that students in California public schools be tested at least once in grades four through six and once in grades ten and eleven on locally developed standards in reading comprehension, writing, and computation.

3.11 What effect does the pupil proficiency law have on your child's graduating from high school?

To receive a high school diploma, your child has to complete the local high school course of study and successfully pass the district's proficiency test.

3.12 What is the high school proficiency test?

Each school district must have established standards of proficiency for its high school graduates. These standards must cover at least the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Each district must also have developed a test to assess a student's attainment of those standards.

3.13 Who must take the proficiency test?

All high school students must pass the proficiency test to graduate.

3.14 How many opportunities will a student have to take the proficiency test?

Every school district has its own testing schedule. But all districts are required to allow students who fail the test to retake it as many times as the district's testing schedule allows.

3.15 May a student with limited-English proficiency take the proficiency test in a language other than English?

Students must use English only in the proficiency test. The school may allow students to use their native language during the testing period, but English must be used in the final test.

3.16 Must schools provide special services for limited-English-proficient (LEP) students to help them pass the proficiency test?

Schools must provide bilingual education services for LEP students to prepare them for the proficiency test.

3.17 Will the parents be notified if a student fails the proficiency test?

If a student fails the proficiency test, the school is required to notify the parents in writing and invite them for a meeting to discuss what the district and the parents can do to help the student pass the proficiency test.

3.18 If a student completes all required courses but fails the proficiency test, what can be done?

If a student fails the proficiency test but completes all required courses, he or she may continue to take the proficiency test until it is passed. Many school districts set up remedial classes to help students who have failed the proficiency test.

3.19 If my child does not complete the required courses or does not pass the proficiency test, are there other ways to obtain a high school diploma or equivalent?

Students ineligible for graduation because they have not completed the required courses may continue to take courses until they meet the requirements. Any student over sixteen years of age may take the *California High School Proficiency Examination*, which is given three times a year in more than 100 locations in California. (Testing times and locations are posted at every high school and public library.) Those who have passed the *High School Proficiency Examination* receive certificates that are equivalent to high school diplomas. Any person over eighteen years of age who did not graduate from high school and is not enrolled at a high school may take the *General Educational Development Test* to obtain the equivalent of a diploma. The *GED Test* is given in 250 testing centers in California throughout the year.

3.20 What is the California Assessment Program (CAP)?

The California Assessment Program (CAP) annually assesses student achievement in every public elementary school and high school in California. It requires 30 minutes of time once a year for every third, sixth, eighth, and twelfth grader. Only CAP uses the same test in all schools and provides uniform information statewide on achievement in California elementary schools and high schools in reading, language, and mathematics.

3.21 What information does CAP provide for each school?

The California Assessment Program provides the following information:

- Overall school-level scores in reading, language, and mathematics
- Detailed information about strengths and weaknesses in the basic skills program
- Comparable information over several years to identify trends in scores
- Comparison of your school to similar schools and to all other schools in California
- Information about student attitudes towards reading, writing, and mathematics
- Information about the performance of different groups of students; for example, girls versus boys and new students versus those who have been in the school for several years
- Periodic information about other factors related to school performance, such as television watching, homework, and recreational reading

3.22 Where can you find CAP reports?

Each school and school district office should have a report for its third, sixth, eighth, and twelfth grades.

3.23 When do the latest test results become available?

Results from the previous school year are available each November at your local school or school district

office. They are presented annually to your local school board and to the State Board of Education.

3.24 May my child enter a community college without a high school diploma?

Yes. Anyone who has a high school diploma or equivalent or who is over the age of eighteen and can benefit from instruction is eligible for admission to a California community college. Students seeking admission should consult the admission office of their local community college.

3.25 What admission requirements does The California State University have?

State university students are selected from among the top one-third of high school graduates. For admission they must normally have a grade point average of 2.0 or better in all coursework except physical education and military science. Students with grade point averages between 2.0 and 3.2 may be admitted if they score high enough on either the *Scholastic Aptitude Test* or *American College Test*. Beginning in fall 1984, first-time freshmen will have to complete eight semesters of college preparatory English and four semesters of college preparatory mathematics to be eligible for admission.

3.26 What admission requirements does the University of California have?

University of California freshmen are selected from among the top one-eighth of California high school graduates. To be elibible for admission, students must meet the subject, examination, and scholarship requirements specified in the university's undergraduate application packet, available free of charge from any campus.

3.27 What financial aid is available for my child's college education?

Several types of aid are available to students with financial need, including grants (money you do not need to repay), loans, and part-time work. For information about financial assistance, contact the financial aid office at the institution your child is interested in attending. High school students should also contact their school counselor. To apply for federal or state assistance, obtain the form "Student Aid Application for California" from the institution or from the California Student Aid Commission, 1401 Fifth St., Sacramento, CA 95814.

4.0 Bilingual Education

4.1 What is the Home Language Survey?

When a child is enrolled in a California public school, the *Home Language Survey* should be distributed to determine the language(s) spoken at home by each student. School districts are required to distribute the survey forms so that a language census can be taken statewide. If any of the following questions is answered as other than English, the child is determined to be a non-English-speaking child:

a. What language did your son or daughter learn when he or she first began to talk?
b. What language does your son or daughter most frequently use at home?
c. What language do you use most frequently to speak to your son or daughter?
d. What language is most often spoken by the adults at home?

4.2 How does the school determine each child's language proficiency?

As a result of the *Home Language Survey*, if a child's home language is other than English, the child is tested for English comprehension and on a state-designated test of English oral language proficiency. Scoring must follow the publisher's norms. Reading and writing assessments are optional for students in kindergarten and grades one and two. If a child scores less than fluent on the assessments, the child is considered to be limited-English proficient (LEP) and must be placed in an appropriate bilingual program. However, if a child scores fluent and his or her English proficiency is comparable to that of the majority of pupils of the same grade or age whose primary language is English, the child is considered to be fluent-English proficient (FEP) and is put in a regular English-only program.

4.3 What is bilingual education?

Bilingual education is designed for students of limited-English proficiency (LEP). It helps these students learn English through their primary language. In the bilingual classroom the teacher provides instructions in both English and the children's first language, if necessary. In this way students can learn ideas in their first language while becoming skilled in English.

4.4 What should be the qualifications of staff members in a bilingual program?

Teachers should be bilingually credentialed. However, when a teacher in the bilingual program does not speak the primary language of the student, an instructional aide who is fluent in the dominant language of the student assists the child with the primary language. The district must ensure that each hired aide is able to understand, speak, read, and write English and the primary language of the student. The aide must be familiar with the cultural heritage of students of limited-English proficiency in the bilingual classes to which he or she is assigned.

4.5 When is a bilingual program provided at the elementary level?

Whenever a school of any school district has ten or more students of limited-English proficiency of the same primary language in the same grade level, the district must offer a bilingual program in a self-contained classroom.

4.6 What types of bilingual programs are available?

- *Basic bilingual education program:* Basic bilingual education is an organized program of instruction in which participating pupils receive instruction in and through English and the primary language of the LEP pupils. The principal goal of this option is to increase the English language proficiency and academic achievement of the LEP students.
- *Bilingual bicultural education:* Bilingual bicultural education is an organized program of instruction in which participating pupils receive instruction in and through English and the primary language of the LEP pupils. The purpose of this option is to increase the overall academic achievement and English language proficiency of LEP pupils and to develop the LEP pupils' primary language skills.
- *Innovative bilingual program:* The purpose of the innovative bilingual program option is to promote innovations in program options mentioned above that focus on new management approaches, greater emphasis on team teaching, or other appropriate improvements that expand the learning opportunities of pupils of limited-English proficiency.

4.7 What happens when an elementary school has fewer than ten LEP students?

The students will be provided an individual learning program (ILP) designed to meet equal educational opportunities for LEP students by promoting English language development and by sustaining normal academic achievement through the use of the student's primary language for subject matter instructions.

The elementary-level individual learning program represents the minimum program requirements for elementary LEP pupils not enrolled in basic bilingual, bilingual bicultural, or experimental bilingual programs. It is an individualized version of program option designed to provide equal educational opportunities for elementary LEP pupils by promoting English language development and by sustaining normal academic achievement through the use of the pupil's primary language for subject matter instruction.

4.8 When is a bilingual program provided at the secondary level?

There are no classroom composition requirements based on linguistic criteria for secondary programs. However, the teachers providing the primary language component must be bilingual crosscultural teachers or, if no such teachers are available, language development specialists who are assisted by bilingual crosscultural aides. There are two types of bilingual programs available at the secondary level:

- *Secondary-level language development program:* The secondary-level language development program for LEP students is a structured bilingual program delivered by bilingually credentialed teachers and/or language development specialists assisted by bilingual crosscultural aides. The program is designed to promote English language proficiency and academic achievement through the use of the student's primary language for instruction in the nonelective content courses required for graduation.
- *Secondary-level individual learning program:* The secondary-level individual learning program represents the minimum program requirements for secondary LEP students and must be provided for all secondary LEP students not enrolled in a secondary-level language development program. It is a systematic, individualized program of instruction designed to ensure equal educational opportunities for secondary LEP students by promoting English language development and by sustaining normal academic achievement through the use of the student's primary language for subject matter instruction.

4.9 How long does an LEP student have to stay in the bilingual program?

All LEP students are to be assessed annually for English proficiency with an instrument selected by the district. When an LEP student meets the definition of FEP based on district-adopted standards, the student is reclassified as fluent-English proficient and is eligible for an all-English program.

4.10 Must parents be notified before a child may be enrolled in a bilingual program?

Yes. Before a child may be enrolled in a bilingual program, the parents of the child must be notified in writing about the following:

- The program being offered
- Other program options available
- The parents' right to visit the program
- The parents' right to withdraw their child from the program
- The parents' right to participate through the school and district bilingual advisory committees

4.11 What if parents wish to withdraw their child from a bilingual program?

If parents of an LEP pupil wish to withdraw the pupil from a bilingual program (both elementary and secondary), the school must then provide the pupil an individual learning program (ILP).

4.12 May parents request the withdrawal of their child from an individual learning program?

Yes. Parents may request that their child be withdrawn from an individual learning program (both elementary and secondary). In such cases the district must establish a procedure to ensure that parents are informed of the goals, objectives, and activities of the individual learning program by an administrator or designee knowledgeable about the program. A withdrawal request signed by the parent and administrator, along with a copy of the individual learning program from which the pupil has been withdrawn, must be maintained in the school's files.

4.13 What is a bilingual advisory committee?

Each school district with more than 50 LEP pupils must establish a bilingual district advisory committee. At the same time each school with more than 20 pupils of limited-English proficiency must establish a school-level advisory committee. Parents of LEP pupils not employed by the district are always welcome to join the committee and must constitute a majority of the committee.

4.14 What are the responsibilities of the bilingual advisory committee?

The committee will advise on the development of a district master plan for bilingual education which will take into consideration the school site master plans for bilingual education. The committee will also assist in conducting a districtwide bilingual education needs assessment on a school-by-school basis. In addition, the comittee will:

- Advise on the establishment of district bilingual education programs, goals, and objectives.
- Assist in the development of a plan to ensure compliance with teachers' and teacher aides' requirements.
- Assist in the administration of the annual language census and advise on requests to use an alternative instrument and/or procedures.
- Review and comment on the written notification(s) to limited-English-proficient, fluent-English-proficient, and English-only students of initial enrollment.
- Review and comment on the district language reclassification criteria, standards, and procedures.
- Sign off on waiver requests related to bilingual education.

5.0 Additional Education Programs and Services

5.1 What is advanced placement?

Advanced placement is a cooperative educational endeavor based on the fact that many young people can complete college-level studies in secondary schools. Able, interested students are given opportunities both for college-level learning and for demonstrating their accomplishments through advanced placement examinations.

5.2 What is alternative education?

Alternative education makes it possible for parents, students, and teachers to request optional schools or educational programs. School authorities do not have to do what is requested, but many provide for different needs. For example, some school authorities provide optional (alternative) schools in which students may start their studies in their native tongue or be enrolled in a classroom where the teacher speaks the child's primary language. Parents and students should ask about the choices (alternatives) offered. They may also ask for programs that are not offered.

5.3 What is continuation education?

Continuation education provides a part-time attendance option for high school students sixteen or

seventeen years old at the time of enrollment. Continuation high schools or continuation classes have served as the largest dropout prevention program in California. The goal is to provide a flexible, personalized program to help students meet district graduation requirements in a small school environment.

5.4 Who may need continuation education?

Students may need part-time high schools if they are employed part time or full time, are concurrently enrolled in other training or educational programs, or need a shorter school day or school week for physical, social, or economic reasons.

5.5 What is vocational education?

Vocational education involves learning a specific occupational trade or course of study. It is provided by school districts and regional occupational centers and progrms to all students enrolled in California public schools. Part-time employment may be obtained for students who need the earnings from such employment to continue their vocational training on a full-time basis.

5.6 What is the intent of vocational education?

Vocational education programs are intended to provide training or retraining that is of high quality, is realistic, and is suited to the needs, interests, and abilities of the student.

5.7 Who is eligible to receive vocational education?

Eligible persons would include high school students; persons who have completed or discontinued formal education or are preparing to enter the labor market; those who are employed but need to upgrade skills or learn new skills; those with special education handicaps; and those in postsecondary schools.

5.8 What is work experience education?

Work experience education is a course of study that the governing board of a high school district or other local educational agency may establish. Standards and operational guidelines for acceptable programs are established by the state. Three types of work experience programs in California are:

- *Exploratory work experience education:* a combination of related instruction and structured occupational experiences designed to assist the student in the career guidance and development process. The student has the opportunity to observe a variety of occupations. There is no intent to teach productive skills.
- *General work experience education:* a combination of related work experience education instruction and paid employment designed to assist the student in acquiring desirable work habits and attitudes. Paid employment need not be related to the student's career goals.
- *Vocational work experience education:* a combination of concurrent vocational classroom instruction and paid employment experiences directly related to the student's occupational goal.

5.9 What is adult education?

Adult education provides education through community-based organizations in basic education, English as a second language, and other subjects of interest to adults. To locate a program, contact your local high school or school district office.

5.10 Who pays for adult education?

The state of California through the State Department of Education awards annual grants to qualified agencies providing basic education, grade eight and below, and for English as a second language.

5.11 Who is eligible to enroll in adult education programs?

Low-literate and non-English-speaking students sixteen years of age or above not enrolled in a high school are the target population for the adult education programs. However, many enrichment programs are offered as well for those who are fluent in English and possess a high school or college diploma.

5.12 What is opportunity education?

Opportunity classes and individual opportunity programs are among several programs designated to help students succeed in school. Identified students are placed in a part-time adjustment class in place of or along with a minimum attendance day.

5.13 Who provides opportunity education?

Programs and services are provided by qualified school personnel. The programs provide a chance for students to continue their education, alleviate adjustment problems, and help students return to the regular school or classes as soon as possible.

5.14 Is there a child development program available for my child in the state educational system?

Yes. Your child may be enrolled in a state-subsidized child development program that provides services for a period of less than 24 hours a day through local public and private educational agencies.

5.15 Am I eligible for a state-subsidized child development program for my child?

Yes, if you are employed or are in job training or are seeking employment or are disabled *and* meet the established eligibility and need criteria.

5.16 How many types of the state-subsidized child development programs are there?

There are nine types of such programs:

1. General
2. Migrant
3. Campus
4. School-age parent and infant development
5. Alternative payment
6. State preschool
7. Intergenerational
8. Special programs for severely handicapped children
9. Resource and referral

5.17 Where can I go to enroll my child in a child development program?

You may go to any of the public or private agencies funded for such program services to meet your needs. These agencies include school districts, community colleges, The California State University and the University of California, offices of county superintendents of schools, county welfare departments, private colleges and universities, private nursery schools, home care providers, and nonprofit organizations.

5.18 What can my child learn in a child development program?

It prepares your preschool child to go to kindergarten or first grade and helps your school-age child with homework or remedial study and some recreational activities.

5.19 What are some of the benefits my child and I will get from a child development program?

Benefits include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Safe and appropriate physical environment
2. Age-appropriate activities
3. Cultural, linguistic, and other special needs program activities
4. Family and community involvement
5. Parental education
6. Efficient and effective local program administration
7. Diverse linguistic and cultural staff that match the makeup of the children and families
8. Support services, such as housing needs
9. Social services, such as welfare rights and services
10. Health services, such as low-cost or free health care

5.20 What are the expenses for a child development program?

A parent fee may be charged in accordance with the established sliding fee schedule based on the family income and eligibility.

5.21 What are year-round schools?

Year-round schools usually begin each school year in July and end the school year the following June. Students attend school for the same required 175 to 180 days, as in the traditional schools. However, rather than attend school continuously for nine months and then have three months off during the summer, they have three or four shorter vacations that vary from three to six weeks each..

5.22 What are year-round calendars?

Year-round calendars are designed especially for year-round schools. For example, in the 45-15 plan, students attend school for nine weeks, then have three weeks of vacation. This pattern is repeated four times during the year. Other examples are the 60-20 plan and the 90-30 plan.

5.23 Are programs in year-round schools the same as those in regular schools?

Yes. The students in year-round schools have the same learning opportunities, curriculum requirements, work experiences, student activities, and sports teams as students have in regular schools.

5.24 Why are not all schools year-round schools?

One day they may all be year-round. However, California schools have traditionally started in September and ended in June. It is hard to break tradition.

5.25 Are year-round schools required?

In some overcrowded schools a year-round calendar is required. In less crowded schools, parents have a choice between nine-month and year-round calendars.

5.26 Do all year-round students attend class at the same time?

In less crowded schools all students are on one year-round track. They all attend school at the same time and take vacation at the same time. In very overcrowded schools the students are divided into four groups. One group is always on vacation while three groups are in school. The groups are rotated at each vacation cycle so that everyone completes the same amount of school.

5.27 Do year-round schools offer summer sessions?

Yes. Summer sessions in year-round schools, called intersessions, are offered during the shorter vacation breaks. Students can have the same courses as are offered in the summer, but the scheduling is different.

5.28 Where can I get more information on year-round schools?

First, contact the district coordinator for year-round education. Other good sources of information are the

principal of the year-round school, teachers, and school counselors.

5.29 Will my children enjoy year-round education?

Yes. The great majority of students enrolled in year-round programs and their parents enjoy attending year-round schools. If your children are assigned to or select a year-round school, you should look forward to a positive experience for them.

5.30 What is summer school?

Summer school is held during the months of June, July, and August. State-supported summer school programs are available for (1) students in grades seven through twelve who need help in meeting district standards of proficiency; (2) seniors in need of credits for graduation; (3) juniors who need to repeat a course and cannot take the course the next regular school year; and (4) students enrolled in year-round and special education programs. Additional state-funded summer school instruction is available for students in the core academic areas of mathematics, science, social science, language arts, foreign language, fine arts, and computer education.

5.31 How can summer school attendance help students?

The summer school programs allow students to take advanced academic courses and provide enrichment for elementary and junior high school students. Students can also take the courses they need to meet graduation requirements.

5.32 How do I know if a child is gifted or talented?

The legal definition of a gifted and talented child in California is a pupil enrolled in a public elementary or secondary school in California who is identified as possessing demonstrated or potential abilities that give evidence of high performance.

5.33 What are the distinguishing features of the California Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Program?

Since 1961 this program has been concerned with potential as well as demonstrated ability. It has led the nation in programming geared to the development of specific intellectual and creative abilities.

5.34 What are the GATE identification categories?

a. Intellectual ability
b. Specific academic ability
c. High achievement ability
d. Creative ability
e. Visual and performing ability
f. Leadership ability

5.35 What kind of evidence is used to identify that a child is gifted and talented?

a. School, class, and individual pupil records
b. Evaluation by a credentialed school psychologist and assessment by professional persons (Written parental consent should be obtained before testing.)
c. Group and individual tests
d. Interviews and questionnaires (teacher, parent, and others)
e. Pupil products
f. Judgment of peers

5.36 What grade levels are served in GATE programs?

GATE districts should work toward the identification and implementation of services for gifted and talented youngsters at all grade levels.

5.37 Are school districts required to have GATE programs?

No. GATE programs are optional. However, the 443 school districts that had such programs in 1984 contain more than 80 percent of the total public school enrollment in California.

5.38 What are work permits?

Work permits are documents required for underage students to become employed.

5.39 Who is responsible for issuing work permits?

School district personnel are responsible for issuing work permits to minors. No minor having a work permit and no minor under eighteen years of age who is otherwise required by law to attend school may be out of school and unemployed for a period longer than ten consecutive days while the public schools are in session. This restriction does not apply to any minor who has been graduated from a high school maintaining a four-year course above the eighth grade or who has had an equal amount of education in a private school or who has been awarded a certificate of proficiency by the state.

Under certain conditions a work permit may be issued to any minor between twelve years of age and eighteen years of age. (For more information see the *Work Permit Handbook for California Public Schools,* available for $6, plus sales tax for California residents, from Publications Sales, California State Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802-0271.)

5.40 What information does a valid work permit contain?

A valid work permit must contain:

- The name, age, birth date, address, and phone number of the minor
- The place and hours of compulsory part-time school attendance for the minor or statement of exemption therefrom; and the hours of compulsory full-time school attendance for the minor if the permit is issued for outside of school hours
- The maximum number of hours per day and per week the student may work while school is in session
- The minor's social security number
- The signature of the minor and the issuing authority
- The date on which the permit expires

6.0 Parental Involvement in the Schools

6.1 Why should I become involved in my child's schooling?

You as a parent play an important role in your child's education. You are your child's first and most important teacher. In most cases you know your child better than anyone else and can share important information with teachers that will help them understand your child better. When you give teachers an opportunity to communicate with you, you indicate to them that you are willing to work with them in the education of your children. They know that they can call on you to help resolve problems that may surface at school or at home and that you will support each other for the benefit of your child.

6.2 How can I support my child's education at home?

There are many ways to help your child do well in school:

- Make sure that your child has an adequate night's sleep and a nutritious breakfast to have a good start each day.
- Help your child develop positive attitudes toward school and learning and encourage him or her to participate in school activities.
- Encourage your child to continue working in his or her studies and explain the importance of education to his or her future.
- Be aware of what is being taught in school and reinforce it at home.
- Communicate frequently with your child's school. Phone teachers and counselors if a personal meeting is inconvenient.
- Read notices, newsletters, and bulletins sent home by the school and return them signed if requested to do so.
- Find out what special services are available to your child at school and in the community.
- Be aware of current educational policies and laws and how they affect your child.
- Support your child's teacher and school.
- Arrange a definite time without any interference for your child to do homework.
- Assist your child with homework and check it when it is finished.
- Read to your younger children.
- Take or send your children to the neighborhood library to check out books.
- Take your children on educational trips to the museum, zoo, art shows, different neighborhoods, and so on.
- Limit the time that your child is allowed to watch television each day.

6.3 What are some of the ways in which I can participate in my child's school?

As a parent you have many opportunities to become involved in a variety of activities in your child's school. Schools are always eager to involve parents in organizations, such as a school site council, school advisory committees, district advisory comittees, bilingual advisory committees, and parent-teacher organizations.

You may be requested to:

- Help in your child's classroom.
- Work in a parent's room which is used by parents to make materials, games, or projects needed by teachers for classroom use.
- Work in the school library or cafeteria.
- Supervise children during field trips to the park, the neighborhood library, the zoo, and so on.
- Supervise playground activities.
- Share your cultural practices, hobbies, or skills, such as wood carving, needlepoint, photography, and so on.
- Arrange bulletin boards.
- Make telephone calls to other parents.
- Read stories to groups of children.
- Do individual tutoring.
- Help children to build projects.
- Participate on fund-raising committees organized

to raise money to purchase additional materials or play equipment for the school.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences and "open house."
- Attend school board meetings.

6.4 What rights do I have as a parent?

As a parent, you have the right to:[1]

- Choose whether your child goes to a public, parochial, or private school.
- Receive information about what is being taught, what methods and materials are being used, and how achievement is evaluated at your child's school.
- Visit your child's classroom on advance notice to the teacher or principal. Check with your own school district for correct procedures.
- Request conferences with the teacher and principal.
- Look at materials used in the classroom and review any materials purchased with federal money for special programs.
- Receive information concerning minimal competencies, proficiencies, or skills your child is supposed to accomplish.
- Voice your opinion on what is taught in your child's classroom. You do not have the final say and should work with the school and/or school board in making your views known.
- Expect that your child will be physically and emotionally safe while at school.
- Expect adequate supervision of your child during the school day.
- Be informed in advance about school rules, attendance policies, dress codes, procedures for visiting the school, and so on.
- Appeal a school decision that affects your child's rights.
- Challenge a school decision to place your child in a special class for students considered to have behavioral problems.
- Appeal a decision made by the school to suspend or expel your child from school.
- Receive information about what tests your child is given and what the purpose is for testing.
- Receive information about any psychological testing the school does involving your child. Your permission must be given before such testing can take place.
- Receive information concerning test scores—what they mean and how they are used.
- Participate as a member of a parent committee or council. These groups may be required by law or may be voluntary.
- Attend school board meetings to learn what is going on in the district.
- Be heard when school policies are set or changed, such as establishing a school dress code or changing high school requirements.
- Look at the records the school keeps on your child.
- Question anything in your child's record that you feel is inaccurate or misleading or is an invasion of privacy and get a satisfactory response from the school.
- Have your handicapped child placed in an appropriate public school program. Parents also must give written consent for the placement of their handicapped child.

[1]All of the items listed here (except the last item) are taken from Bruce Baron and others, *What Did You Learn in School Today?* New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1983, pp. 264—65. Used with permission.

7.0 Structure of the Public School System

7.1 What is the structure of the public school system?

California public schools are organized into elementary school districts (usually including kindergarten through grades six or eight); unified school districts (kindergarten through grade twelve); and high school districts (grades nine through twelve).

7.2 What major agencies have an effect on the public schools?

The major agencies that influence the schools are school districts, offices of county superintendents of schools, state agencies, and federal agencies. All have a part in providing appropriate education for your child.

7.3 Who controls the schools in your school district?

School districts are controlled by a local governing board. The board is responsible for establishing, maintaining, and operating the schools under its control.

7.4 What is the structure of a typical elementary school?

In an elementary school the principal is responsible for the daily program, and each teacher is responsible for one class. When a school has enough limited-English-proficient students with the same primary language, bilingual teachers are required. In addition, the school staff usually includes specialists in reading,

mathematics, and English as a second language; speech therapists; a nurse; teachers' aides; a community liaison officer; a bilingual program coordinator; and resource teachers.

7.5 What is the structure of a typical high school?

In a high school the principal is responsible for the whole school and is generally aided by assistant principals who are responsible for specific areas of the school's administration. Larger high schools have chairpersons for each department (English, mathematics, science, physical education, and so on). Special programs, such as bilingual education, as a rule, have a director or coordinator.

7.6 How are school districts financed?

Part of public school funding comes from local property taxes. However, most of the funds come from state taxes. The California Legislature decides the amount of funding for public schools. Additional funds are given to some school districts that have students with special needs. Most of the federal funds are used to help students who have special needs, students from low-income families, students with bilingual education needs, students enrolled in vocational education programs, and handicapped students.

7.7 Why should parents understand the structure of public schools?

Informed parents are able to help their children make appropriate decisions about their educational needs. Parents should understand the structure of the California public education system to enhance educational opportunities for their children and themselves.

Publications Available from the Department of Education

This publication is one of over 600 that are available from the California State Department of Education. Some of the more recent publications or those most widely used are the following:

American Indian Education Handbook (1982)	$3.50
Basic Principles for the Education of Language-Minority Students: An Overview (1983)	2.00
Bibliography of Audiovisual Instructional Materials for the Teaching of Spanish (1975)	1.00
Bibliography of Instructional Materials for the Teaching of French (1977)	1.50
Bibliography of Instructional Materials for the Teaching of German (1977)	1.00
Bibliography of Instructional Materials for the Teaching of Portuguese (1977)	1.00
Bibliography of Spanish Materials for Students, Grades 7—12 (1972)	1.00
Bilingual-Crosscultural Teacher Aides: A Resource Guide (1984)	3.50
Boating the Right Way (1985)	4.00
California Private School Directory	9.00
California Public School Directory	14.00
Career/Vocational Assessment of Secondary Students with Exceptional Needs (1983)	4.00
Child Development Program Guidelines (1983)	3.75
College Core Curriculum: University and College Opportunities Program Guide (1983)	2.25
Computers in Education: Goals and Content (1985)	2.50
Curriculum Design for Parenthood Education (1982)	4.00
Guide for Vision Screening in California Public Schools (1984)	2.50
Handbook for Planning an Effective Foreign Language Program (1985)	3.50
Handbook for Planning an Effective Mathematics Program (1982)	2.00
Handbook for Planning an Effective Reading Program (1983)	1.50
Handbook for Planning an Effective Writing Program (1983)	2.50
Handbook for Teaching Cantonese-Speaking Students (1984)	4.50
Handbook for Teaching Pilipino-Speaking Students (1986)	4.50
Handbook for Teaching Portuguese-Speaking Students (1983)	4.50
Handbook on California Education for Language Minority Parents—Armenian-English Edition (1986)	3.25
Handbook on California Education for Language Minority Parents—Cambodian-English Edition (1986)	3.25
Handbook on California Education for Language Minority Parents—Chinese-English Edition (1985)	3.25
Handbook on California Education for Language Minority Parents—Hmong-English Edition (1986)	3.25
Handbook on California Education for Language Minority Parents—Korean-English Edition (1986)	3.25
Handbook on California Education for Language Minority Parents—Laotian-English Edition (1986)	3.25
Handbook on California Education for Language Minority Parents—Spanish-English Edition (1986)	3.25
Handbook on California Education for Language Minority Parents—Vietnamese-English Edition (1986)	3.25
History—Social Science Framework for California Public Schools (1981)	2.25
Improving the Attractiveness of the K—12 Teaching Profession in California (1983)	3.25
Improving the Human Environment of Schools: Facilitation (1984)	5.50
Improving Writing in California Schools: Problems and Solutions (1983)	2.00
Individual Learning Programs for Limited-English-Proficient Students (1984)	3.50
Literature and Story Writing: A Guide for Teaching Gifted and Talented Children (1981)	2.75
Making Mealtime a Happy Time for Preschoolers (1983)	7.50/10
Manual of First-Aid Practices for School Bus Drivers (1983)	1.75
Martin Luther King, Jr., 1929—1968 (1983)	3.25
Model Curriculum Standards: Grades Nine Through Twelve (1985)	5.50
A Parent's Handbook on California Education	3.25
Physical Performance Test for California, 1982 Edition (1984)	1.50
Planning Vocational Home Economics Programs for Secondary Schools (1983)	2.75
Practical Ideas for Teaching Writing as a Process (1986)	6.00
Preparing Food for Preschoolers (1983)	7.50/10
Preschool Program Guidelines (1983)	2.70
Raising Expectations: Model Graduation Requirements (1983)	2.75
Reading Framework for California Public Schools (1980)	1.75
Resources in Health Career Programs for Teachers of Disadvantaged Students (1983)	6.00
School Attendance Improvement: A Blueprint for Action (1983)	2.75
Science Education for the 1980s (1982)	2.50
Science Framework for California Public Schools (1978)	3.00
Science Framework Addendum (1984)	3.00
Standards for Scoliosis Screening in California Public Schools (1985)	2.50
Studies on Immersion Education: A Collection for U.S. Educators (1984)	5.00

Techniques for Preventing the Spread of Infectious Diseases (1983)	1.50
Trash Monster Environmental Education Kit (for grade six)	23.00
University and College Opportunities Handbook (1984)	3.25
Visual and Performing Arts Framework for California Public Schools (1982)	3.25
Wet 'n' Safe: Water and Boating Safety, Grades 4—6 (1983)	2.50
Wizard of Waste Environmental Education Kit (for grade three)	20.00
Work Permit Handbook (1985)	6.00

Orders should be directed to:

California State Department of Education
P.O. Box 271
Sacramento, CA 95802-0271

Remittance or purchase order must accompany order. Purchase orders without checks are accepted only from government agencies in California. Sales tax should be added to all orders from California purchasers.

A complete list of publications available from the Department, including apprenticeship instructional materials, may be obtained by writing to the address listed above.

A list of approximately 190 diskettes and accompanying manuals, available to members of the California Computing Consortium, may also be obtained by writing to the same address.

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